

## Message Text

SECRET

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43

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P 161225Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2393

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 165

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS

SUBJ: SA-7'S

REF: STATE 008385

1. MET WITH GENERAL SHIHABI JANUARY 15 TO STRESS OUR CONCERN OVER IMPLICATIONS REPORTED SYRIAN PROVISION OF SA-7 MISSILES TO ELEMENTS IN LEBANON. SHIHABI LISTENED ATTENTIVELY TO PARA 3 REFTEL AND MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS.

2. SARG SHARED USG CONCERN OVER CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF SITUATION IN AREA AND PARTICULARLY IN LEBANON. HE CONCURRED IN VALIDITY OUR FEAR THAT SA-7'S MIGHT GET INTO WRONG HANDS BUT OBSERVED ONLY EFFECTIVE WAY TO FORESTALL THIS PROBLEM WAS TO ACCELERATE MOVEMENT TOWARDS PEACE. RECENT INTENSIFICATION ISRAELI ATTACKS ON SOUTH LEBANON VILLAGES AND ATTACKS ON BEIRUT PROPER CARRIED GRAVE RISK FURTHER DETERIORATION AND CONSEQUENT LOOSENING OF EFFECTIVE CONTROLS OVER ALL WEAPONS, NOT ONLY SA-7'S.

3. TOLD SHIHABI I COULD AGREE WITH HIS GENERAL ANALYSIS BUT ARGUED HE WAS NOT FACING UP TO EITHER CURRENT OR FUTURE PROBLEMS OF KEEPING THIS PARTICULAR WEAPON FROM FALLING INTO IRRESPONSIBLE HANDS. REMINDED HIM OF OUR EARLIER DISCUSSIONS

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ABOUT PALESTINIAN "REJECTIONST FRONT" AND OTHER PALESTINIAN

ELEMENTS WHICH NOT SUBJECT CONTROL OF PLO LEADERSHIP. RECALLED HE HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT AS FURTHER SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS TOWARDS PEACE SETTLEMENT IS MADE WE MAY WELL ENTER CRITICAL PERIOD WHEN REJECTION-ISTS OR LUNATIC FRINGE WILL SEEK SABOTAGE PEACEFUL POLITICAL SOLUTION. THIS PARTICULAR WEAPONS IN WRONG HANDS COULD BE USED AGAINST CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT TO CREATE MAJOR INCIDENT AND BLOCK MOVEMENT TO SOLUTION WE BOTH SO DEEPLY DESIRED.

4. CONTINUED THAT IT IN INTERESTS OF SARG AND ALL OTHERS WHO HOPED FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO KEEP THIS WEAPONRY OUT OF HANDS OF THOSE WHO WOULD USE IT TO BLOCK PEACEFUL SOLUTION. SHIHABI ACKNOWLEDGED THIS POINT BUT REITERATED THAT ONLY REAL ANSWER WAS SIGNIFICANT ACCELERATION OF USG PEACE EFFORTS WHICH WOULD, INTER ALIA, CALM LEGITIMATE LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN FEARS OF ISRAELI ATTACKS AND EVEN OCCUPATION. NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION REPORT HE HAD RECEIVED ONLY HOUR BEFORE OUR MEETING OF ENTRY OF ISRAELI TROOPS IN SOUTH LEBANON VILLAGE KFAR SHUBA

5. AFTER FURTHER DISCUSSION SHIHABI AFFIRMED THAT WEAPONS SARG HAD FURNISHED FOR SAIQA USE UP TO NOW REMAINED UNDER SAIQA CONTROL. HE CAUTIONED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS CONTROL COULD SLIP IF CURRENT LEVEL ISRAELI PROVOCATIONS CONTINUED. IF, HE SAID, SA-7S ARE IN SAIQA HANDS, USG MAY BE ASSURED THEY ARE CONTROLLED BY SAIQA. HE UNSURE, HOWEVER, THAT SA-7'S ARE NOT ALREADY IN HANDS OTHER THAN SAIQA AND FROM SOURCES OTHER THAN SARG.

6. SHIHABI THEN ASKED IF USG ASSUMED SA-7'S WERE REACHING LEBANON ONLY FROM SYRIAN SOURCES. REPLIED REFTEL DID NOT SAY THIS BUT TO ME DID INDICATE OUR ASSUMPTION THAT SARG WAS PRINCIPAL IF NOT SOLE SOURCE OF THIS WEAPON IN HANDS OF PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS IN LEBANON. DID HE CHALLENGE THIS ASSUMPTION? SHIHABI REPLIED TO HIS KNOWLEDGE, IRAQ, EGYPT, LIBYA AND POSSIBLY ALGERIA ALSO HAD SA-7'S AND USG COULD NOT ASSUME THAT SA-7'S NOW IN LEBANON WERE COMING EXCLUSIVELY FROM SYRIA.

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7. COMMENT: AM DISSATISFIED WITH SHIHABI'S REPLY AND INTEND MAKE POINTS IN REFTEL SOONEST TO FONMIN KHADDAM AND PERHAPS ASAD AS WELL. DOUBT WE WILL BE ABLE SECURE DIRECT ASSURANCES SA-7'S WILL BE RETURNED TO SYRIA AND KEPT UNDER SARG CONTROL BUT WILL SEEK ENSURE SARG LEADERSHIP FULLY AWARE OUR CONCERN. REQUEST ANY FURTHER ARGUMENTATION DEPARTMENT MAY WISH ADD TO THAT PROVIDED REFTEL AND CONCURRENCE IN LINE I TOOK PARA 3.

ALSO ADVISE IF THERE ANY EVIDENCE SA-7'S MAY BE REACHING  
LEBANON FROM OTHER THAN SYRIAN SOURCES, AND,  
IF SO, WHETHER WE WILL BE MAKING DEMARCHES ELSEWHERE  
THAN HERE AND MOSCOW.  
MURPHY

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MILITARY EQUIPMENT, ARMS, TERRORISTS, MISSILES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 16 JAN 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975DAMASC00165  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Office:** ACTION SS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** 75 STATE 008385  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 11 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <12 JUN 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SA-7'S  
**TAGS:** PINS, MASS, XF, SY, PLO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006